# Duolingo doubles courses with AI-powered expansion and pivots to AI-first model



On April 30, 2025, Duolingo launched its most extensive content update to date, introducing 148 new language courses developed with the assistance of generative artificial intelligence (AI). This significant expansion more than doubles the number of courses available on the platform and extends the availability of popular languages such as Japanese, Korean, and Mandarin across all 28 supported interface languages. The update aims to broaden access to these languages for speakers globally, particularly benefiting learners in Latin America, Europe, and various Asian countries.

The company credits AI for enabling a rapid course development cycle, a process that previously took much longer. Duolingo's CEO, Luis von Ahn, highlighted the contrast by noting, “Developing our first 100 courses took about 12 years, and now, in about a year, we’re able to create and launch nearly 150 new courses,” describing it as “a great example of how generative AI can directly benefit our learners.” The new courses were created using a “shared content” system where AI generates and validates materials that can be adapted quickly across different languages, enhancing efficiency.

Senior Director of Learning Design, Jessie Becker, explained Duolingo’s ongoing role for human expertise despite AI’s expanded involvement: “Now, by using generative AI to create and validate content, we’re able to focus our expertise where it’s most impactful, ensuring every course meets Duolingo’s rigorous quality standards.” The company has maintained that humans still write and review AI-generated outputs for features like Roleplay, though the sheer scale of nearly 150 courses delivered in less than a year raises questions about the extent of human oversight.

This content update coincided with an internal announcement made by Duolingo on April 29, revealing a strategic pivot to an “AI-first” operational model. CEO Luis von Ahn likened this shift to the company’s earlier transition to “mobile-first” in 2012. The new directive mandates AI as the default foundation for work, with staff members, or “Duos,” required to spend 10% of their time learning AI tools. It also signals a reduced emphasis on traditional coding roles and a decreased reliance on human contractors for tasks AI can perform more efficiently.

Von Ahn reportedly stated in the internal memo that manual content creation does not scale adequately to meet Duolingo's growing instruction needs. He also introduced what sources have called “constructive constraints,” where automation is tied to performance metrics and staffing decisions. The CEO assured employees, “This isn’t about replacing Duos with AI. It’s about removing bottlenecks so we can do more with the outstanding Duos we already have.” However, this announcement followed earlier workforce changes, including a 10% reduction in contractor roles in January 2024, a move partially attributed to AI integration.

The shift to an AI-first approach has sparked mixed reactions. On social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) and LinkedIn, some users have expressed concerns about a perceived decline in content quality and accuracy, particularly in less frequently studied languages. Others lament the company's apparent prioritisation of automation over the human elements traditionally central to language learning, prompting some users to delete the app and call for others to follow suit.

Duolingo's integration of AI is not new. The company has implemented “Birdbrain” AI to personalise exercise difficulty and launched its premium “Duolingo Max” subscription in March 2023, which uses OpenAI’s GPT-4 for advanced features like “Explain My Answer” and conversational “Roleplay.”

Regarding the language courses themselves, the newly introduced classes focus primarily on beginner levels, roughly corresponding to A1-A2 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). They include reading components (Stories) and listening features (DuoRadio), with plans for more advanced materials in subsequent updates.

The WinBuzzer is reporting this significant update and the accompanying strategic changes as a major development in digital language learning, illustrating how AI is reshaping educational content production and company operational models.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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